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## HOW WE RESTRICT IMMIGRATION.

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IMMIGRATION has practically come to a standstill. We have to look back beyond the year 1880 to find figures so low as those for the months of January and February, 1894. If we take into consideration the unprecedented number of emigrants from the United States to Europe since August, 1893, and the fact that an exceedingly large portion of all the recent immigrants has consisted of mere relatives (members of the same family) of residents of this country, we may well state that immigration has substantially ceased. A good deal has been said of recent years about the supposedly all-deciding influence of the great steamship trade on immigration. Many members of our legislative bodies actually believed, or pretended to believe, that it was the avarice of the steamship magnates and of their agents which almost exclusively created immigration, and that it needed only a severe "pounding" of the creators of the evil to abolish it once for all. The eagerness of the steamship companies to earn money has certainly not lessened in these times of forced depression and unavoidable losses in business. No doubt their agents work harder than ever to earn commissions. And yet we find an immigration equal to naught, and, if advance reports prove to be as correct an indication as usual of the prospects for this year, it bids fair to be one of the poorest in immigration since 1856. The traffic in prepaid tickets, which for many years past has represented about 50 per cent. of all the sales, has been wiped out of existence. Our foreign-born residents are themselves too deeply engaged in the hardest struggle for life to spare money to pay the passage of their European relatives or friends, or to assist them to earn a living. Their letters to the

old fatherland are no longer filled with the spirit of bragging, so common among newcomers who have exchanged a life of deprivation for a civilized standard and for the prospects of healthy prosperity. Such glowing letters, the very best and in fact the only efficient immigration agents, are replaced by tales of woe not much less heart-rending than those told by the European kinsfolk and friends, and certainly much more sad and impressive because unexpected. To make matters worse, an unprecedentedly large number of would-be Americans returning to Europe have additional and aggravated tales of woe to relate. Whether they have returned voluntarily among the tens of thousands who since August, 1893, have given up the hope of finding an Eldorado on this side of the Atlantic, or whether they have been forced to return by the watchful gatekeepers of the United States as undesirable, they become in either case anti-immigration agents of the most effective type. Not even the enactment of the sternest statute, could be more restrictive of immigration than these natural regulators of the ebb and flow in the tide of aliens.

To substantiate these general remarks by telling figures, I present a table of immigration at the port of New York during the winter months, October, November, December, January, and February, of 1893-94, compared with the same months of 1890-91 and 1891-92. The winter of 1892-93 does not admit of fair comparison, on account of the cholera scare and the enforced stoppage of immigration. Nevertheless, its immigration, during the five months mentioned, exceeded that of last year's corresponding period by 2,777 :

	1890-91.	1891-92.	1893-94.
October.....	31,434	36,798	15,466
November.....	30,590	28,019	12,345
December.....	17,048	20,116	11,415
January.....	11,092	13,761	5,578
February.....	15,377	20,882	6,841
Total for five months.....	105,541	119,576	51,645

Immigration to the other ports of entry has, I am told, diminished by a still larger percentage. As far as results go, therefore, the first year's enforcement of the last immigration law (the act of March 3, 1893), under a Democratic administration, has

proved beyond doubt a great success as a restrictive measure. But no one, however intimately he may be connected with the framing or the enforcement of this and the other immigration laws, is or will claim to be entitled to credit for the result attained, which under existing conditions is certainly all that could be wished for. These conditions, only too well known to every suffering American, have unquestionably done the most, but the provisions of the last act, and the enforcement of them, have done not a little to bring about the desired result. And as the law of March 3, 1893, was avowedly of a tentative character, it is very interesting to review its practical working during its lifetime of a little more than nine months.

The act "to facilitate the enforcement of the immigration and contract labor laws of the United States," approved March 3, 1893, took effect, as to vessels departing from foreign ports for ports within the United States, after sixty days from the passage of the act, *i. e.*, after the 2d of May, 1893. It did not enlarge the category of excluded persons. Its provisions were but additional to those of the laws of March 3, 1875, August 3, 1882, February 26, 1885, March 23, 1887, October 19, 1885, and March 3, 1891, and related principally to the duties of the steamship companies and the manner of examining and inspecting passengers. Since its passage, as before, the excluded classes consist only of idiots, the insane, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease, persons convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude (expressly saving those convicted of a political offence), polygamists, and finally contract laborers, who, with some minor exceptions, are absolutely excluded, as well as all assisted immigrants, unless it be affirmatively and satisfactorily shown, on special inquiry, that they do not belong to one of the excluded classes. But while there is no change in the excluded classes, there is a notable and most beneficial improvement in the methods provided for their detection.

First of all, the steamship companies have been forced to initiate the process, before embarkation, of winnowing the immigrants. Their manifests, which must be sworn to by the master or commanding officer and by the surgeon of the vessel, before the United States consul at the port of departure, are required to

state, as to each and every immigrant, the full name, age, and sex, whether married or single; the calling or occupation; whether able to read or write; the nationality; the last residence; the seaport for landing in the United States; the final destination, if any, beyond the seaport of landing; whether having a ticket through to such final destination; whether the immigrant has paid his own passage, or whether it has been paid by other persons or by any corporation, society, municipality, or government; whether in possession of money, and, if so, whether upwards of \$30, and how much if \$30 or less; whether going to join a relative, and, if so, what relative, and his name and address; whether ever before in the United States, and, if so, when and where; whether ever in prison or almshouse or supported by charity; whether a polygamist; whether under contract, express or implied, to perform labor in the United States; and what is the immigrant's condition of health mentally and physically, and whether deformed or crippled, and, if so, from what cause.\*

The very nature and the number of these questions, the answer to which is to be sworn to by responsible representatives of the steamship company as correct and true to the best of their knowledge and belief, enforce a hitherto unknown examination of the immigrants before embarkation. Any violation of this law exposes the steamship company to heavy fines and, besides, to the quite large expense of maintaining the immigrants during the period of inspection and special inquiry, and of returning the debarred to the nation whence he came. Moreover, those unlawfully landed must be likewise returned, at any time within one year, at the expense of the steamship company; and a person who becomes a public charge within one year after his arrival, from causes existing prior to his landing, is deemed to have come in violation of the law. It may be said, to the credit of the steamship companies, that they have gracefully submitted to all the requirements of the law and to the stringent regulations issued by Secretary Carlisle, and that, as a rule, they have earnestly endeavored to carry out the law, not only in the letter, but also in the spirit. Numerous inquiries filed at Ellis Island from would-be immigrants or their American friends furnish clear evidence of the unwillingness of the

\* Before the last law went into effect, the officers of the vessel had only to report the name, nationality, last residence, and destination of all aliens.

steamship companies to assume the risk of transporting any immigrants likely to be excluded. It is certain that at least the first part of the process of assorting immigrants, the preliminary examination by the steamship companies before embarkation, has proved sufficient to keep out the most flagrant cases of undesirability, and to furnish a fair working basis for the second and more efficient part of the winnowing process, that conducted by the Federal inspection officers. And it is here, at this second stage of sifting, where the new law has introduced some important additions to and improvements upon the old methods of inspection, which had become very nearly a mere matter of census-taking. By a very simple and practical system of grouping and labelling the immigrants, it is made possible to identify each and every one of them. The inspection officers are obliged to put all the questions above enumerated anew to the immigrant, and to compare his oral statements with the written evidence before them. Every person who may not appear to the inspection officers to be clearly and beyond doubt entitled to admission must be detained for a "special inquiry," to be conducted by not less than four officials acting as a board of inspectors; and no immigrant can be admitted upon special inquiry except after a favorable decision made by at least three of said inspectors. To what extent this novel institution has been carried into operation on Ellis Island may be best judged by the plain fact that, up to March 1, not less than 7,367 cases have been brought before the Board of Special Inquiry, who, at 792 sessions, not seldom after repeated rehearings, admitted 5,714, and excluded 1,653, immigrants. An additional safeguard in the nation's interest was established by granting to any dissenting inspector the right of appeal from a decision to admit, while under the old law only decisions adverse to the right of the alien to land were subject to appeal. To further protect our country against the influx of paupers, the new law provided that no bond or guaranty, written or oral, that an alien immigrant shall not become a public charge should be received from any person, corporation, or society, unless authority to receive the same should in each special case have been given by the Superintendent of Immigration, with the written approval of the Secretary of the Treasury. No inspection officer, not even the Board of Special Inquiry, is, therefore, now competent to accept assurances of friends, or even relatives, of

an immigrant that he will be taken care of, as sufficient basis for admittance.

It is obvious that government officials, who are faithful, conscientious, and sagacious as well, are sufficiently enabled by the provisions of the latest immigration law to protect this country from an influx of any considerable number of undesirable immigrants, without excluding desirable and welcome additions to our population. Especially the clause referring to "persons likely to become a public charge" affords ample and broad opportunity to use the greatest discretion and good judgment not only as to the individual seeking admission, but also bearing in mind the general conditions of the country. The decisions of the Federal officers in charge of this important branch of the public service must necessarily be guided, in a country like ours, by careful consideration of all the general and special circumstances of each case. Whether or not the present officers perform their arduous and responsible duties to the full satisfaction of the nation it is not for me to pass upon. But of one thing I am sure: the United States Bureau of Immigration in Washington, under its circumspect and broad-minded chief, is not only fully alive to the great responsibility resting upon the gatekeepers of the country, but endeavors earnestly to imbue all its agents, from New York and Halifax to San Francisco and Victoria, with a spirit equal to the momentous duties devolving upon them.

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